

CHARLES F.F. CAMPBELL
PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR THE
BLIND

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Practical Training For the Blind

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and

Editor of the "Outlook for the Blind"



Paper Presented at the
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PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR THE BLIND.

(Illustrated by Stereoptican Slides.)

Charles F. F. Campbell, Cambridge, Mass., Superintendent Industrial
Department, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind,
Editor of the "Outlook for the Blind."

At the morning session Dr. Louis Stricker, in his admirable paper, "Blind Relief Commissions of Ohio," gave you a comprehensive survey of the condition in which many of the blind are to be found to-day. It is only fair to remind you, however, that the present aggregation of the indigent blind is the result of the lack of attention in the past. The Ohio Pension is an attempt to relieve the needs of this accumulated group of neglected people, and for sometime to come it will take a large annual expenditure of money to accomplish this. The purpose of Schools, Workshops, and Commissions for the Blind is to make such expenditures less necessary.

I am not unsympathetic with the needy blind. As many of you know, I am the son of a blind man and was born in a school for the blind and for these reasons, if for no others, I have the keenest appreciation of the conditions and needs of the blind. I realize, however, that those attending this Convention are as much interested in *correction* as in *charity*. Dr. Stricker has already stated the methods that are being pursued in dealing with the charitable part of the problem. This evening we are to consider the corrective side of the question.

Great interest is now being taken in the necessity of preventing blindness caused by accident or disease. The movement which is everywhere on foot to secure protection for men and women using unguarded machinery in factories is a step toward the saving of eyes while an inquiry into the causes of blindness reveals the fact that a considerable proportion of those who are sightless need never have been so if their eyes had been properly cared for in babyhood. "Ophthalmia Neonatorum" is, as you no doubt know, a germ disease, due to venereal disease in the mother, occurring in the form of inflammation in the eyes of the newly born, which, with medical care and sufficient nursing, probably never need result in blindness. It is most likely to result in blindness among the poor because of lack of medical advice and proper nursing both before and after the child's birth. As it is, at least one-fourth of the blind in all our schools for the blind to-day are blind because of this disease.* The medical profession, as represented by the American Medical Association, have a special committee on Ophthalmia Neonatorum, and at the conference held at Chicago, in June, 1908, a special report was presented upon this subject.** While it may be the duty of the doctors to lead the way in this matter of prevention, let no one present, who ever hears of a child having inflamed eyes, rest until a doctor's attention has been secured or the child is sent to a hospital.

By means of the following series of lantern slides I wish to show you how a child without sight or an adult blinded in later life may be trained to become a useful citizen. Entering a school for the blind a visitor's attention is naturally attracted by the devices which are employed to make the educational methods used in a school for the seeing available for the blind. To read and write, the blind employ raised charac-

* See Miss Lucy Wright's article in October, 1908, "Outlook for the Blind," page 121.

**A reprint of this report can be found on page 69 of the July, 1908, "Outlook for the Blind"—Publication Office, 277 Howard St., Cambridge, Mass.

ters made up of a series of dots. By using one or more of a group of six dots arranged after the fashion of the six spots of a domino it is possible to construct the alphabet and also other signs which represent parts of words frequently used, for example, *ing*. These dotted letters can be made on a special typewriter or in a frame with the aid of a metal stylus. When the dots have been pressed up on the paper they can be read by passing the fingers over them. Adults or those in advanced years appear to have less difficulty in using the alphabet composed of lines rather than dot characters.

Information with regard to the books which are available for the blind in this state can be secured by writing to the library at the School for the Blind in Columbus. The Matilda Ziegler Magazine, which is sent free every month to the blind throughout the United States and Canada, can be secured upon application to its editor, Mr. Walter G. Holmes, 306 W. 53rd street, New York City. For mathematical work a metalslate is frequently used. The surface of the slate is perforated with holes in which can be placed pegs or type. At the end of this type appear simple characters. When the character is set in the hole in one position it represents, for example, the figure "1," and turned over in another position it stands for a different figure. In this way blind children can work out sums by means of these raised characters, just as seeing children work them out by means of pencil and paper. For geography it is a simple matter to use maps in relief. The finger readily detects the rivers which are depressed and the mountains which are raised. Cities, of course are represented by dots in relief instead of black spots as on maps for the seeing. For diagrams raised lines can be used exactly as one uses pencil or chalk lines. Games, such as checkers, chess and cards, are as easily made available to the blind as the work in the class room. Anyone here could arrange a checkerboard for a blind friend by cutting out squares of cardboard and glueing them onto the black squares. The white men could be made characteristic to the touch by the insertion of a round headed tack or by using circular pieces for the white and square for the black men. Cards can be marked with the raised characters as described for reading and writing. All these games, of course, can be played between blind and sighted competitors.

In leaving this set of lantern slides it should be borne in mind that every photograph has shown a *device* and not an educational *method*. The pencil and paper used by the sighted pupil are as definitely a means to an educational end as the frame and stylus used by the blind pupil. Unfortunately the general public, not being familiar with these simple devices, frequently express undue astonishment that the blind are able to acquire by means of touch that which we accomplish by means of sight, and this exaggerated sentiment voiced in the visitors' exclamations of "How wonderful!" etc., cannot but be harmful to the child whom his instructors are striving to make as normal as possible while recognizing and making fair allowance for the handicap of blindness. But using the few devices shown for reading and writing, geography, mathematics, etc., it is possible for blind children to be taught by the same educational methods as are being used by the seeing. In large cities the experiment is being tried of having blind children come to the public schools for the sighted. There is a special teacher to instruct the children to use the various devices and to supervise the preparation of lessons. Beginning with a short daily period the blind child enters the regular class with the seeing children until the time when he, or she, reaches the high school and is able to participate in all classes. This experiment is being continued in Chicago and Milwaukee with considerable success. In Cincinnati the plan of having the day school maintained under the city schools is being tried. The only difference between the work in the school in Cincinnati and that in the School for the Blind in Columbus is that the blind children in Cincinnati live in their own homes while those attending the school in Columbus board at the Institution. Of course it must be borne in mind that day classes are only practicable in large centers of population. The ultimate success of the Chicago versus the Cincinnati plan will be followed with keen interest.

While day schools for the blind will doubtless be given a thorough trial in large cities, schools for the blind will be needed for many generations to come not alone

because the children come from thinly populated districts where a day school is impossible but because some blind children need training which cannot be given in a day school. The physical well-being of many blind children is neglected in their homes often through mistaken kindness on the part of the parents. Fearful that the child may come to harm, he is forbidden to help about the house or play in the garden as do his brothers and sisters with the result that when he comes to the school for the blind he is often under-developed through lack of the ordinary activities of childhood by which seeing children are unconsciously developed. Much greater attention has to be given in the school for the blind to the physical well-being of the pupils than in a school for the seeing. Many blind children must be taught to run and play while most children learn with no other teacher than a healthy playmate. Carefully graduated gymnastic exercises are imperative and must be made the basis of the physical training to produce a well-developed, healthy, normal student. Recreation must be a definite part of his life. One of the best forms of recreation is dancing and roller skating. Both of these help to give the sightless person confidence in moving about freely and also in cultivating poise and courage. The question is asked whether a blind person on skates does not fall down but the immediate reply is to ask the questioner if when learning to skate he did not also fall down. The blind recognize their proximity to large objects by the sense of hearing somewhat as we do by the sense of sight. We speak of seeing a wall and a blind person might as rightfully speak of hearing it. We are familiar with its presence on account of the light which is reflected from its surface, in exactly the same way sound is reflected and a blind person uses the ear where we use the eye. Just as the effort is unconscious on our part so also it becomes for him. It must not be understood, however, that all blind people are free from clumsiness. Even those who have had the best of training do not always overcome their awkwardness, it goes without saying that those who lose their sight late in life do not as readily recognize objects and find it difficult to go about with freedom.

Swimming is an admirable and very popular recreation for the blind. In the illustration shown here we see some of the young men learning to dive by means of a diving shoot. When a blind person slides into the water down such a shoot he learns the right angle at which to enter the water when making a good dive. There is little that a blind person cannot do in any kind of diving or swimming. The other pictures will show you the blind athletes "Putting the Shot", "Running a 100-Yard Dash", "Making a Broad Jump", "Walking on Stilts", "Coasting on a Suspended Trolley Wire," "Flying Kites," "Rowing" and taking part in all kinds of games. One of the most popular sports is cycling. This is made possible by means of multicycles. These snake-like machines are composed of a series of automatic tricycles. Their construction and flexibility is very similar to an arrangement of a series of buggies fastened one behind the other, the shafts of each placed under the body of the one in front of it. It is easy to see that such a chain of vehicles can be drawn around a corner on account of the pivoted axle in each vehicle. In the multicycle, each pair of riders is on a flexible unit and as the whole series is joined together it is necessary to have only one person with sight to steer. If you could see the young men and women begging for the opportunity to "go for a spin" on a half holiday you would realize that the young people were anxious to take part in the sport for the sake of the fun and not because somebody had told them that cycling was necessary for the preservation of health.

Dr. Campbell introduced cycling into his school for the blind as a practical means of securing spontaneous recreation. He is himself a living exponent of outdoor exercise for persons without sight. His long cycling trips through Brittany, Norway and the British Isles are testimony to his belief in the value of the cycle for the blind. He has ascended many of the mountains in the Alps, even including Mt. Blanc, and by his ascension of this mountain he unexpectedly called the attention of many people to his faith in the possibility of making the blind independent. He showed by his own energy that the blind could overcome seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. Dr. Campbell's claim has been, even though the blind are provided with the best aca-

demic, musical or industrial training to successfully compete for a livelihood, they must be given the greatest possible confidence and independence. This cannot be gained without a healthy and vigorous body resulting from spontaneous participation in outdoor sports in conjunction with physical instruction.

The result of adequate education for the blind can be found the world over, blind men are succeeding in all walks of life, the graduates of our schools usually in the pursuit of some form of business or music. As tuners and teachers many have succeeded. Some blind men are doing well as lawyers, ministers and editors. Even politicians have a few representatives. No man in America to-day is doing more for the cause of the blind than Senator Gore at Washington. I do not mean by this that he is devoting his energies directly to the welfare of the blind, but by fulfilling his duty as Senator he is teaching the public to realize that the handicap of blindness is not impossible to overcome. Dr. Stricker calls attention in his paper to some of the graduates of the Ohio School for the Blind who have not succeeded. I am not familiar with the past records of the pupils of that institution but it must be borne in mind that none of the successful pupils would have applied for aid. There can be little doubt that there is need of assistance for some of the graduates when they leave Columbus, as in every school for the blind, especially those that go out from the Industrial Departments. There are few men who have learned a trade, for example, broom making, who have the ability to go out in the world as a manufacturer and salesman. The man who is a successful artisan rarely has the talent to dispose of his goods to advantage, to say nothing of the ability to secure his raw material at the most favorable prices. There are few seeing men who succeed in the triple capacity of purchaser, maker and salesman. Add to this the handicap of blindness, which means less speed when making the broom, and it is little wonder that the broom makers should have to apply for aid. Give these same men adequate supervision by means of a state supervised workshop and there will be fewer applications for financial help. In referring to Dr. Stricker's paper it is only fair to note that his fifth observation is "That there is need of workshops for the Blind in all the large cities of the state". Those of us who urge the largest measure of self-respecting aid for the blind do not expect more of them than of the sighted.

A very large proportion of the adult blind are over sixty years of age and for them little aid can be given along industrial lines. Undoubtedly Home Teaching, whereby they may learn to read and occupy their time with simple home occupations, is an indispensable and inexpensive means of making their lives brighter and cheerier. For the blind between the ages of twenty and sixty, larger industrial opportunities must be sought. We are apt to forget that a blind man is after all usually a normal person merely having lost the use of one sense. Would any of you here to-day, if the state held out to you in one hand a dole and in the other the same amount of money which you could earn by faithful and earnest labor, hesitate from which hand to take the help? Until long years of idleness have crushed out the last spark of courage you will find just as many blind as seeing people shrink from being dependent upon any individual or state. It is the purpose of all the modern efforts to help the blind to furnish those of working capacity with reasonable remunerative employment. To accomplish this, even more important than his training, is a recognition on the part of the public that when equipped he can do certain things well. The acknowledgment which merely proclaims the blind man's ability as marvelous is worthless. What is most needed is the sympathy and confidence which will lead an employer to engage a blind musician, tuner, teacher or operator, a householder to patronize a blind artisan, or a shopper to purchase articles made by blind workers. In Michigan there has been recently established, as a result of the efforts of an earnest group of blind men and women, an employment institution for the blind in which instruction in various trades is given and permanent employment to those who cannot return to their homes. Broom and feather duster making are the chief industries there. At Milwaukee, Wisconsin, there is an admirable workshop maintained by the state and where the blind are making baskets. In Philadelphia and Oakland, California, are to be found the

largest broom factories for the blind in this country.* The remark may be made that these institutions are heavily subsidized by the state and city but it is not hard to believe that the workers employed in those establishments are inevitably happier than those who are forced to sit in idleness counting the days when the next allowance will come to them in return for no effort on their part.

In connection with the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind Dr. Howe established a mattress shop some sixty years ago. While it has taken many years of fostering care to bring that shop to its present efficiency the group of nineteen blind employed there is self-supporting. The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, which was established in 1906, aims to establish workshops throughout the state where permanent employment may be afforded the blind who live in the vicinity of the shops. The making of the Cambridge hand-woven rugs, the manufacture of the Wundermop (the invention of a blind man), broom making, and shoe and chair repairing for men are carried on in the central shop. Near by, is a shop for women where hand-woven art fabrics are made. The following pictures show not only the skill acquired by the young women in executing the patterns dictated to them, but their success in the creation of original designs used in saleable articles of artistic merit. In the local shops mattress, broom making, reseating of chairs, joinery and cobbling are carried on according to the training of the men living in the vicinity. The activities of the Commission, however, by no means end with the establishment of these workshops. A complete register of all the blind in the state is maintained and constantly kept up to date by the Commission's agents who are in close touch with the Eye and Ear Infirmary and other agencies throughout the state. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts allowed the commission \$40,000 last year, with the proviso, however, that permanent relief be given to no blind person. Practical assistance through training, employment, home industries, marketing of goods, etc., was given during the year to over 200 individuals and helpful benefits such as securing the help of other organizations for the blind or general agencies for relief, temporary employment, vacations, boarding places, clothing, concert tickets, etc., to about 175 more. This is but the second year of the active operation of the Commission and every month makes its work more effective. At one time it may be instrumental in seeing that the group of children who ought to be at the State School for the Blind are helped to go there. At another, there may be found those who, in addition to being blind, are mentally deficient and these are sent to the Institution for the Feeble Minded. Elsewhere may be found an elderly person who needs a permanent home and all that is lacking to secure it for her is arousing the interest of influential people or of some organization in her own community. A man may apply for aid who has been employed in a large factory where he has given faithful service for many years. This man would doubtless become an applicant for Pension Relief had we such a provision in Massachusetts, but for the timely intervention of the Commission's agent in his behalf. Skeptical as is his employer he yet consents to allow his former workman, even though blind, to try his hand at his previous occupation with the gratifying result to the employer, employee and Commonwealth that the man continues to earn a good wage. The Commission is marketing the articles made by a group of some 80 women who live in their own homes, all of whom have learned to either sew or knit at the State School, or from the Home Teachers. The Commission maintains a salesroom in Boston where the products of any blind person in the state which are of marketable quality are sold without expense to the consignors. As a supplement to this work a summer salesroom was established at a popular seaside resort through the efforts of local philanthropists who wished to help the blind girls in the vicinity, and indirectly aided other blind workers. The Commission furnished the necessary supervision and as a result of ten weeks' operation about \$1,000 worth of goods were sold.

Another group of applicants seem to have mechanical ability and the right home

*For detailed information regarding workshops for the blind see July, 1908, "Outlook for the Blind."

conditions that warrant instruction in cobbling. They come to the Central Shop, board for them in the vicinity is provided, and they receive the necessary instruction. After returning to their homes a solicitor (a partially blind man needing employment) is sent to help work up local trade for them. In each of the above instances it has been the effort of the Commission to give a helping hand where it was most needed. The result of continued and persistent effort along such lines will eventually mean a much larger return to the blind in self-respect. But it is not necessary to come to Massachusetts to find work being done along these lines. In Cleveland, Dayton, Columbus, and Cincinnati efforts are already well under way to help the blind to help themselves. The possibility of securing employment for the blind in factories for the seeing has been admirably demonstrated through the efforts of Edward G. Pease, the Secretary of the Ohio Commission for the Blind. This week I had the privilege of seeing young women working side by side with their seeing sisters, one making boxes for hats, another folding oyster boxes, while at the works of the National Cash Register Co., three blind or partially blind women are doing good work in various departments. The only thing that we can say to you from the old Bay State is "You have made an admirable beginning; all that you need to do is to continue along the same lines."

The Ohio Pension Law may do the blind great harm. It certainly will do so if, on account of its establishment, you feel that all has been done for the blind that needs to be done. No greater mistake could possibly be made. The Pension does, and undoubtedly will, bring relief to many needy blind people. I am sure there is no person who is working for the blind who would withhold relief when it is necessary. All that I plead for is that the men and women who ask for work shall not be given a poor substitute. State aid is needed but when the time comes that the only form of state aid is a cash subsidy on that same day will the self-respect of many blind people be destroyed. Many blind people ask neither for charity nor for pity but for the opportunity to do their share toward supporting themselves. When the law makers of Ohio have been so generous to those who need relief it cannot be doubted that the same men will be just to those who ask for the opportunity to work.

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